THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) to (c) No private airlines, including Sahara Airlines, have so far been granted permission to start scheduled international flights. However action is at hand to give effect to the Joint Statement issued during the recent visit of the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, which provides for operations of private domestic airlines to Sri Lanka.

Aircrafts leased by Haj Committee

666. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether foreign aircrafts were leased by Air India on behalf of Haj Committee for Haj operations in 1998 to 2001;

(b) if so, the terms of the lease, year-wise;

(c) corresponding amounts charged by Air India/Indian Airlines/Saudia when they operated the Haj Charter Service for 2002 and 2003; and

(d) the Charter fare paid to the carriers by the Haj Committee in 2001, 2002 and 2003?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVAITION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The terms of lease year-wise are as under:

Year	Name of operator	Term of lease	USD per Pilgrim	Rs. per pilgrim	At other cash cost per Pilgrim (Rs.)	Total per pilgrim (Rs.)
1998	Air Charter Co. USA	Wet Lease	560	22166	7240	29406
1999	Mido Aviation UK	-do-	498	21069	6786	27855
2000	-Do-	-do-	592	22677	5849	28526
2001	Kampuchean Airlines	do-	8717	34122	526.50	25405
	Thailand					
	Saudi Arabian Airlines Saudia	--		32000	2122	34122

(c) Details are as under:-

Year	Air-India-Per Pilgrim	Saudia-Per Pilgrim
2002	USD 700/- (ex Bangalore, Kozhikode and Delhi)	USD 700/- (ex Ahmedabad, Bombay and Delhi)
	USD 770 (ex Kolkata, Lucknow and Chennai)	
2003	USD 710/- (ex Bangalore, Kozhikode, Nagpur and Delhi)	USD 710 (ex Ahmedabad, Bombay, Hyderabad and Delhi)
	USD 780/- (ex Kolkata, Lucknow and Chennai)	

In addition to the above, fare additional total cash cost incurred by Air India towards royalty, interest and other miscellaneous expenditure was also charged to the Government.

(d) The Haj Committee does not pay any individual carrier, but pays Air India Rs. 12,000/- per pilgrim towards fare of the pilgrims.

Rural branches of Banks

667. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of rural branches of banks closed and opened by the Public Sector Banks during the last three years;

(b) whether Reserve Bank of India has liberalised the branch licensing norms of if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Banks have started the revamping process to close unviable branches in rural areas;

(d) the branches closed as a result of grant of V.R.S. to staff;

(e) the number of loss-making branches which were closed; and

(f) the amount paid to the staff opting for VRS till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) The details of the rural branches of